Report on the present State of Religion in Connecticut

Connecticut was settled principally by the English in 1633. The colony originally derived its name from a river which the Indians called Quonehtacut or Connecticut signifying the long river, which river was one of the principal sources of its wealth & convenience.

The character of the original settlers of this colony is familiar to all who have read their history. They were men of enlightened minds and irreproachable lives & were sincerely devoted to the welfare of the people.

The present inhabitants of this highly favoured part of our country, though much degenerated from the original purity of their forefathers, never the less partake in no small degree of their frugality and industry as well as the strict morality which pervaded the hearts of their ancestors.

The Bible is respected and read extensively in this State and perhaps in no place is the Word of life more regarded. Connecticut has always enjoyed a pious & enlightened Clergy; a Clergy, observes a celebrated Historian, whose average attainments

have not been inferior to those of the clergy of any other community, and who have uniformly maintained a christian & happy influence over the public sentiment and character. The great doctrines of the Reformation have always been held by the clergy and people and a singular degree of harmony has prevailed both in doctrine & in discipline.

The Theatre has few friends in this state. Horse racing and cock fighting are effectually forbidden. Pigeon hunting is little practised. Capital punishments are inflicted not oftener than once in eighteen years and but two Duels were ever fought in this state.

The most prominent defect in the character of the people of Connecticut is, perhaps, their laws relative to Divorces passed in 1667 by which law a divorce may be obtained for three years wilful desertion. This law was originally designed to take effect merely in cases of long and entire neglect and of extreme unkindness, and for about a century it operated only in such cases. But since that time instead of preventing the evil intended it has increased it. If a married couple wish to be separated they can in three years accomplish their purpose without difficulty. With this & some other exceptions the morals of the people are unusually correct.

Literature. In no part of the world says Dr Morse is the education of all ranks of people more attended to than in Connecticut.

From its first settlement schools have been established by law in every town & parish for instructing all the children in reading, writing and arithmetic: and so strictly has this law been regarded that it is a rare thing to find a person of either sex who cannot read & write.

Connecticut has one college situated at New Haven. It was founded in 1700 & incorporated by the general assembly of Connt in 1701. It has been and continues to be a flourishing institution.

Blessed with the smiles of Providence, and repeatedly visited with the mild influence of the Sun of Righteousness it has sent forth thousands to fortetize & enrich the Church and City of God. It has recently been visited with a powerful revival of Religion and has numbered among its hopeful subjects about 65, the most of whom will probably devote themselves to the Gospel ministry.

The faculty of the college consists of a President, five Professors and five Tutors.

The Governor, Lieut Governor & six Senior Senators together with the President & 10 Fellows constitute the Corporation of the College.

Besides this Institution there are academies established in various parts of the State. At Cheshire there is an episcopal academy liberally endowed. This academy had originally a fund of $13.000. It has since increased about $25.000. It was incorporated in 1801 and titled the Episcopal academy of Connecticut, and has a library of about 200 volumes consisting principally of Greek and Latin authors.

In New Haven there has recently been organized a seminary for the purpose of preparing episcopal youth for the Gospel ministry. The number of students at present is small

The management of this Institution is vested in a board of Trustees consisting of the Bishops of the several dioceses within the United States - of six clergymen and six laymen appointed by the house of clerical & lay deputies at every meeting of the general convention; any seven of whom are competent to form a board for transacting business. They have power to collect & manage funds for the benefit of the school - to appoint Professors & teachers therein and prescribe their duties - regulate the admission of students & prescribe the course of studies to be observed by them - to make such by-laws & regulations as may be necessary for the government of the school & generally to take such measures as they may deem essential to the prosperity of the Institution. They have power to fill vacan

cies which may occur by death, removal or resigna
tion of any clerical or lay members.

The State of Connecticut is divided into eight count
ies and about 100 townships; and contained accord
ing to the census of 1810 a population of 261.942 inhab
itants.

Religion. In the county of Hartford containing
18 towns with a population of 44.733, there were in
1811, thirty five Congregational Churches; thirty two
of which are supplied with a preacher of the Gospel.
eight Episcopal churches & four Ministers - Thirteen
Baptist Churches & five Ministers.

In the County of New Haven are were in 1811. 34
Congregational churches & 32 Ministers. 14 Episcopal
churches & 10 Ministers. Two Baptist & both vacant.
In the County of New London 21 Congregational church
& 13 Ministers; 3 Episcopalian & 2 Ministers; 15 Baptists
& 12 Ministers. In Fairfield County 29 Cong-Churches
& 20 Ministers, 16 Epis & 5 Ministers. 8 Baptist churches
and 7 Ministers. In Windham County 28. 20. 2. 1. 14, 11
Litchfield County has 32 Cong Churches & 31 Ministers
13. 6. 9. 4. Middlesex County has 17 cong. churches & 17
6 Episcopal Churches & 3. 5. 4. In Tolland County 15
Congregational churches & 11. 2. 1. 1. 1.

The whole number of Congregational churches in Con[n]
in 1811 was 211, 35 of which were without a stated preacher
of the Gospel.

Of the Episcopal denomination there were 64 churches and thirty two destitute. Of the Baptist there were 67 & 23 destitute. In 1818 there were 213 Congregational, 69 Episcopal & 70 Baptist churches in Connecticut.

Besides these three principal denominations there are 12 churches and 7 ministers of a different name. The Episcopalians Congs avarage about 40 families or 250 individuals. The Baptists are about equally large. The number of congregationalists is at least 220000. Their congregations avaraging upwards of 1000 individuals or 160 families. The first Episcopal church was founded at Stratford 1722. Previous to this there had been no denomination in the state but Congregationalists.

as to the mode of exercising church government and discipline. in the congregational churches it may not improperly be called a republican religion. Each church has a separate jurisdiction & has power to choose its own minister, to exercise judgment & to enjoy gospel ordinances within itself. The churches are not independant of each other; but are associated for mutual benefit and convenience. There are in the State of Conn^t 13 associations and consociations, which have authority to license candidates for the ministry, to consult for the general welfare and to recommend measures to be adopted by the churches but have no authority to enforce them.

The associations are composd of Ministers alone; consociations of Ministers with a delegate from their respective societies.

The general association of Conn meets annually on the third tuesday of June composed of two representatives from each district association. There is also united with them a representation of three members of the General assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. One member from the general convention of congregational & presbyterian ministers in Vermont; two members from the general association of Massachusetts; and two from the General association of N. Hampshire. Rhode Island To these several bodies the general association of Conn sends annually the same number of Representatives.

Among the numerous associations formed in Conn for the express purpose of meliorating the condition of the human race and of diffusing extensively the knowledge of the truth, Bible, missionary charitable & Education societies hold a conspicuous place. The influence which these benevolent associations have exerted, has been happy in a high degree; and the benefit resulting to the Church of God, by their means, will not be fully known until that day when the hearts of all will be opened to view of the assembled Universe.

To give details of the operations and success of these societies would fill a volum & far exceed the limits of a Report, shall therefore pass them over and proceed to consider the state of the Church from the commencement of the year 1820 to the following Spring in 1821.

Perhaps in no part of our country have revivals of Religion been so frequent and so extensive as in Connecticut. The Church founded upon that Eternal Rock - Christ Jesus, has remained and will remain firm and unmoved, and at present presents an aspect most cheering to the pious heart. For the last two years; but more especially the 12 months past the churches in Connecticut have flourished like the garden of the Lord - there has, however been exceptions to this general remark. Some churches there have been who have manifested scarcely any thing but the form of godliness - while others have experienced extraordinary tokens of divine favour.

It is supposed that as many as half of the towns within the limits of Connecticut have within the 12 months past, been visited with a special outpouring of the Spirit of God. And within the city of New Haven ~~on~~ including its adjacent villages it is thought that not less than 400 have become hopeful subjects of renewing grace.

I shall take the liberty to transcribe part of the account

of the late Revival in N Haven which was publish-
ed some months since in the Christian Spectator.
The writers of the following narrative commen-
ces by observing that the year 1820 was commenced
without any indication of unusual interest on
the subject of religion except that several young
men, members of the congregational churches, by
mutual agreement requested their Pastors to attend
a Sabbath evening conference. The request was joy-
fully complied with, & hailed as the harbinger of
greater good. This meeting was continued without
interruption, in a place provided for the purpose
and capable of accommodating not less than 800
persons. The room was always crowded and from
the seriousness & solemnity which uniformly
pervaded the assembly, a stranger abbearing hast-
ily among them, would have thought that
a revival of Religion had already begun. Yet not
more than two or three instances of special
religious impression are known to have existed
for some time. Meetings for prayer, were as they
had previously been, frequent & numerous - and char-
acterized by fervency of Spirit. The Spring opened
with these prospects - although no living breath from
the four winds seemed to breath upon the multitudes
of the slain.

A gentleman in a letter to a friend dated may 10 1827 giving an account of the wonderful display of divine grace in the city of N Heaven thus writes.

The languishing state of the churches had apparently been a subject of deep regret with a few of the friends of Zion for several months previous to the commencement of the Revival in this place; but a sense of indwelling sin - a brokenness of heart - and an agonizing spirit appeared to be wanting until the early part of June last, when a few of the people of God were made most deeply to feel their finishing necessity, & importunately to cry Lord save or we perish. Their cry entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth. The promise was verified. Hearts of stone were made to melt & tears of penitence could no longer be concealed.

It may be useful, continues the writer, to state that after various means had been used - such as solemn exhortation & admonition, enumeration of little circles for prayer, & the organization of a Biblical society (which has been signally blessed) it was agreed by the Brethren to meet with their Pastors and freely express their views in relation to the deplorable stupidity then prevalent in this region & by mutual consultation & supplication - seek the divine presence. accordingly ten or twelve who it was thought had feeling on the subject were invited & met. They apparently came together sensible that all their sufficiency was of God.

The promise was made sure by the manifestation of his gracious presence. The injunction "confess your faults one to another" was complied with with out reserve and contrition for sin was evidently the exercise of all present. Whether sinners would be convicted appeared at this time a secondary consideration. Each one had a consciousness of his unfitness to teach transgressors until he had experienced a revival in his own heart. The importunate supplication appeared to be restore unto me the joy of thy salvation & uphold me by thy free Spirit." At the next meeting for conference the number that attended was doubled. About this time three young men were awakened and in ten days were all rejoicing in hope. The third meeting of this kind was very full and a general shaking was visible throughout the City. The cry of Pentecost was heard from every quarter. Soon after the meetings for conference were commenced, another was instituted especially for the benefit of such as might wish to enquire what they must do to be saved. Ten or twelve only attended the first of these meetings; but so powerful was the work that when the fourth was held, the number had increased to 350. The famous ball-room where many of the dear youth had wasted much precious time in filling up the measure of their iniquity

had now become the devoted place for their repentance and reformation. It is difficult to ascertain the precise number of hopeful converts. About 300 have already united to the congregational churches in Town & College. In the Episcopal ~~Church~~ congregation there is supposed to be as many as 120 hopeful subjects of the work - 130 ~~in~~ among the Methodist and ~~50~~ among the Baptists, the number not known

The same writer continues his narrative by observing that in the latter part of November a number of Brethren from the two churches & College formed themselves into an association & organized 14 social conferences in different parts of the city, all to be attended on Thursday evening. At each of which there is appointed three officiating members. Other members of the association sup- port from eight to ten meetings weekly in the adjacent villages, within the compass of one to ~~five~~ miles from the city; and such members as can leave their occupations have for four or five months past (by invitation from their respective Pastors) have visited the neighbouring churches, not to Preach or to dictate, but to tell what the Lord has done for us; to exhort in the language of one of old, "come thou with us and we will do the good for the Lord hath promised good concerning Israel." They always go two & two as did the ~~disciples~~ disciples whom the Lord sent forth. The Congregation assemble. They tell their simple story and exhort to repentance. after addressing the Congregation

according to their ability. The Church is requested to pray that they may have opportunity for individual conversation. They endeavour to point out the dreadful guilt incurred by churches in times of stupidity & persuade to resolutions of new obedience. By recommendation the Church proceed to institute prayer meetings after the manner they are supported in the city & visiting from house to house. The blessing which has attended these visits of mercy is truly astonishing & silences every objection. These visits have already extended from 30 to 40 miles in different directions and are still extending. In all those places it may be said "Truly the Lord is here". The Spirit is poured out like rain upon the mown grass and converts to Righteousness are multiplying as drops of the morning dew."

"This wonderful work of divine grace, commencing at New Haven has extended to the congregations in Woodbridge, Derby, North Milford, Milford, Stratford, North Haven, Branford, North Branford, Madison, Guilford East Guilford, part of Say brook, North Killingworth, the city of Hartford, East & West Hartford, Windsor, Wethersfield Newington, part of Berlin, Farmington, Bristol, Plainsouth, Warren, New Preston, Goshen, New Milford, South Britain and in a number of other places which we cannot specify. In some of the large towns hundreds have been under conviction of sin at the same time; in those of a smaller size, scarcely a family is left without some one who is rejoicing in hope, or pierced with a sense of sin. Truly may we exclaim in the language of another what hath God

Works consulted are Trumbles History of Connecticut
Morses universal Geography, the Register for the year 1821
Religious Intelligencer, the Christian Spectator, together with
a letter giving an account of the late revival.

May 29th 1821